

Cake and Ocean Blue

by Pennedwing

Category: Avatar: Last Airbender

Genre: Friendship, Romance

Language: English

Characters: Katara, Zuko

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2016-04-11 21:10:36

Updated: 2016-04-11 21:10:36

Packaged: 2016-04-27 18:40:48

Rating: T

Chapters: 1

Words: 5,430

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Fake engagement modern Zutara AU. Also, cake.

Cake and Ocean Blue

Zuko's life had always been unconventional. At 13 years old, he'd gotten burned in an accident with the stove which left his cheek forever red and scarred. A few years ago his father was sent to jail, and shortly after his sister had been put in a psychiatric hospital after a mental breakdown. Since his mother had left the family when he was 11, Zuko was finally on his own, and had moved out when he enrolled in college. Now, as a junior political science and international affairs double major, he was finally getting his life back on track.

Zuko's life had always been unconventional, but still, getting engaged was the last thing he expected to happen to him today.

Zuko was still in bed, the sheets clinging to his legs as he lay sprawled on his mattress, when his phone rang shrilly from its place on the nightstand.

He woke up almost immediatelyâ€”a knee-jerk reaction from years of jolting awake at the slightest creak in his old house, waiting for his father to stumble in drunk after an all-nighter at the bar.

Leaning over, Zuko looked at the screen of his phone, first noting the early hourâ€”6 a.m. on a Saturday morning, hours before he'd planned to get upâ€”and then noting the name flashing in bold, green letters.

He lunged for the phone, almost falling out of bed in the process.

"Hello?" he said breathlessly.

"Hi, Zuko?"

"Yeah."

"It's Katara."

"Yeah. I mean, I know. I saw your name before I picked up."

"Oh, right." There was a slightly uncomfortable silence. It seemed like _ages _since the last time they'd talked (even though it had only been a week or so). Katara had broken it off with Aang about a year ago, before she went to college, blaming the distance. She was going to a school in California for marine biology, and although it was hours away from the high school Aang still attended, it wasn't that far from Zuko, and they got together pretty regularly to have coffee and talk.

Aang knew about this, of courseâ€"Katara didn't want to hide it from him. He hadn't been happy at first. But over time he realized it was okay and actually encouraged it, since he recognized that Katara didn't know anyone else nearby. It was nice for Zuko, too. Since his father and sister were both gone, he got lonely sometimes. Sure, he had other friendsâ€"Jin, a girl in one of his poli-sci classes was nice enough, and Haru, a biology major, although kind of abrasive, was fun to hang out withâ€"but none that had known him before his family imploded. Sometimes Katara even went to visit Azula with him for moral support if nothing else.

Which was why he didn't know why this conversation was soâ€"awkward.

"So what's up?" he asked, sitting up against his pillows. They were all over the place, as were the sheets and blankets. Apparently he'd had a rough night. He'd gone out with Haru the night before, but hadn't drank much and was back at a relatively early hour. Well, as early as it got for third-year college students on a Friday night.

"Well," she started in that voice that told him she was up to no good, "I have a favor to ask of you."

"A favor."

"Yes."

Zuko ran a hand down his face, barely registering the significant stubble that roughened his cheeks and chin, but couldn't stop the grin tugging at the corners of his mouth. It wasn't often Katara asked for something from him. Usually _he _was the one asking her to meet him for lunch, or accompany him to the hospital, or begging her over Skype to help him with the 5-page Shakespeare essay that was due the next morning at 9 and only had 1 sentence on the page.

"What is it?"

There was a brief pause, then, "Listen, this is totally out of the ordinary, I know, and I totally get if you don't want to do it, because frankly I can't believe I'm asking, and I know it might make you uncomfortable so please please _please _don't feel pressure to do

it and I'll totally understand andâ€"

"_Katara_," he interrupted gruffly, although he was amused. "Just spit it out."

"I want cake."

"Cake."

"Yes."

Zuko cocked an eyebrow. "Okay, so do you want to go to a bakery or something?"

"See, I don't want just any cake. There's this bakery in Claremont that's hosting a wedding cake expo and people can go and try all the different cakes andâ€"I'm not going to lie to you, Zukoâ€"I went out last night and may or may not still be kinda high and now I'm _really _craving cake."

Zuko couldn't stop himself. "Oh my _God,_" he cackled into the receiver, running a hand through his hair (which really needed washing).

"Hey, don't laugh at me," Katara grumbled from the other side, and he could imagine the pout on her face and the little crease between her eyebrows that formed when she was disgruntled.

"Sorry, sorry. But what do you need me for?"

"Well, that's the uncomfortable part. Technically, the expo is only open to couples. Engaged couples. As in, engaged to be married."

"Rightâ€|."

"So do you want to get married?" He knew she was jokingâ€"her voice was nervously high-pitchedâ€"but it still hit him in the chest, knocking the wind out of him. He played it off as a coughing fit.

"Aren'tâ€"aren't I the one supposed to be asking you?"

He could _feel _her eye roll through the phone. "Zuko. We won't _actually _be engaged. It's just pretend! Come on," she whined, pleading, although it was completely unnecessary. "There'll be free cakeâ€|."

Zuko sighed, as if he hadn't already resigned himself to it. "Fine. I'll do it. For the free cake."

"Right. For the cake."

He smiled, shaking his head. "What time should I meet you?"

Three hours later, he put his car into park in front of her dorm and honked the horn incessantly until the door opened and she ran out. Even from this distance he could tell she was scowling at him and he smirked back, hitting the horn once more for good measure. She skipped down the stairs, her pink and black sundress billowing out

behind her as she jogged over to the passenger's side door.

"You know I have dorm mates, right?" she asked, leaning through the open window. "And that most of them are still hungover?"

Zuko started the car. "If I have to be up this early on a Saturday, so does everyone else."

Katara rolled her eyes at him and opened the door, throwing her purse on the backseat before getting in her seat. She appraised him. "Wow. You clean up nice."

Zuko flushed, only now realizing he was way overdressed. He had chosen a navy blue suit jacket and matching pants with dress shoes and had actually brushed his hair for the first time in about a week. Katara looked beautiful in her dress—she always did—but it still managed to look casual, like she wasn't trying, whereas he only used this suit for court dates and formal dinners with his professors.

"Seatbelt," he said, trying to angle his reddened cheeks away from her by surveying his side mirror intently.

"Yeah, yeah." She buckled herself in. The bakery wasn't too far away, only about 20 minutes, and with their constant conversation it didn't seem like they'd been driving for long at all when they pulled up to a brick building with an oversized pink wooden cupcake hanging above the door that read "Cathy's Cakes and Bakery."

For a minute after they parked they both sat in the car, looking at the bakery while couples flooded the front doors.

"This is a terrible idea," Zuko finally said, breaking the silence.

"That is a poor attitude," Katara snapped at him. "Now look, if we want to pull this off, we really have to sell it. I expect chivalry. I expect a shower of compliments. I expect gross lovey-dovey eyes that make even the frosting taste sour. Got it?"

Zuko looked wide-eyed at her. "You really think we can do this."

She scoffed and slapped him. "Attitude, darling!"

"Darling?" Zuko repeated, rubbing his wounded arm.

"It's a pet name. We have to have pet names: every couple does. You can call me—"

"Sugarplum?" Zuko supplied, joking.

Katara grinned. "That's perfect! Now let's go," she directed, unbuckling her seatbelt. Zuko groaned, already dreading this, but got out of the car anyway. He was at her door by the time she was ready and opened it for her.

"Why thank you, my darling," Katara smirked at him, already in character.

"Of courseâ€|sugarplum," Zuko grimaced. Her smile faltered only for a moment to glare at him, and then it was back in place. She took his arm and he led them inside.

It was chaos. Tables were set up along the perimeter of the room, samples of cake on little ceramic plates layered in frosting and fruit, jellies and sprinkles. Sugary-looking flowers adorned most of the cakes and the smell of it was overwhelming. Zuko was sure he had never seen so much cake in his entire life. Katara led them, arms clasped, to a counter towards the front of the room where a woman in harsh black glasses was looking down at a binder.

"Hello there!" Katara chirped. Only her eyes, black and beady, moved to look at them over the top of her frames.

"Can I help you?" she asked, her voice bored.

"I believe so," Katara said, tugging Zuko forward. "Mr. and soon-to-be-Mrs. Wang Fire checking in."

_Wang Fire? _Zuko looked sideways at Katara, who pointedly ignored him. Glasses assessed both of them with a skeptical expression, but checked the book nonetheless.

"Ah yes, here you are." She rummaged under the counter and returned with two notepads and pens and two forks. "Here are your supplies. You may take one sample of each cake. Please record your opinions in these notebooks. I see that your wedding is planned for September? At the Hotel DuPan?"

Again, Zuko's gaze slid to Katara, who didn't miss a beat. "End-of-the-summer wedding, don't you think that's perfect? I'm thinking an ocean blue and pearl color theme, but Wang here wants red," she shot him a look. "I've told him a million times you can't do _just red_â€"does red mean maroon? Amber? Crimson? Scarlet, ruby, garnet, blush, mahogany?" She sighed, as if the thought of his ignorance was exasperating rather than her insanely comprehensive knowledge of shades of red. Glasses lifted an eyebrow to Zuko, who, suddenly on the spot, merely shrugged.

Katara patted his arm a little too hard to be considered lovingly. "Menâ€"can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em, am I right?" Glasses pursed her lips in an obviously bogus smile before shoving the materials she'd been holding into their hands. Katara grinned back before heading into the room, Zuko trailing at her heels.

"Ocean blue and pearl? The Hotel DuPan? _September?!_" he hissed. She already had this whole thing planned out, apparently. So much for a wedding being a joint effort.

"What?" she shrugged. "I had to have a convincing backstory to sign up for this."

"_Wang Fire?_"

She stifled a laugh. "Yeah, that was just to mess with you."

Katara was making some incoherent noises deep in her throat that was making Zukoâ€"and everyone else at their tableâ€"visibly

uncomfortable.

"Oh ma _Goooooob_," she moaned, her mouth full of some angel food whatever cake with some kind of fruit filling. "Dis is abaaaaazing!"

Zuko chuckled tightly. "Alright, _sugarplum_, I think you've had enough of that." He moved the plate away much to his pretend fianc 's chagrin, only for it to be replaced by a darkly-frosted cake which she began devouring in milliseconds. A couple across the table was observing her with disapproving frowns, like she was some kind of wild animal. (Which in their defense, she did resemble.) But they had no right to look at her like that, and Zuko glared until they both looked down at their half-empty plates with red cheeks. Katara, fortunately, hadn't noticed the exchange and was currently scarfing down the chocolate cake with a new and improved set of sexual moans. This time, though, Zuko just found himself smiling down at her. They must have tasted 25 cakes already and she was still going strong. His appetite had seriously dipped around cake 16, and there was still half a room to go. But Katara was enjoying herself so much, he didn't really mind taking small bites of the overly sweet forkfuls she offered him.

A few moments later, Katara dropped her fork on the empty plate and leaned back in her chair. "Perfection. Absolute perfection."

"I take it you liked that last one?"

"I liked all of them!" she laughed. There was a dash of chocolate frosting on the corner of her lip, and without thinking, Zuko wet his thumb and wiped it off.

Realizing what he was doing, he quickly pulled back his hand, his eyes as wide as the plates in front of them.

"I    um, sorry about that," he stammered.

Katara ran the back of her hand over her mouth. "No problem," she said, though she wouldn't look at him, and he could have sworn there was a dark red tint to her cheeks. She wiped her fork with a napkin, then did his and handed it to him. "Next table?" she asked cheerily, seemingly over the awkwardness.

As they made their way to the next set of cakes, Glasses approached a microphone attached to a podium in the back of the room. She tapped it twice, eliciting an annoying feedback from the speakers, then leaned in. "Attention, may I have your attention, please? The artists are going to come out now to meet with you all. So if you have a preference, please take note of the number of your favorite cake and find that artist. They'd be more than happy to talk about wedding arrangements."

Zuko rolled his eyes at the "artist" title    although some of the cakes on display _were_ _pretty impressive    and sat down at the table. Katara dug into the next set of samples. Neither of them were interested in _actually_ talking to any of the chefs or designers, so they kept their heads down as the people with numbered tags attached to their shirts passed by. Katara had snagged them two plates of a black and white colored cake with a sweet, but not too sweet frosting. Katara wagged her eyebrows at him, and he almost choked on

the cake because of her ridiculous expression. But he had to admitâ€"it was good.

"That one is my favorite," a voice said over their shoulders. Both Zuko and Katara turned to see a man with dark skin and short brown hair standing behind them, hands on his hips, smiling proudly down at them. "It's a marble cake with buttercream frosting over fondant. A classic with a twist, I like to say. The blending of two styles."

"It's incredible," Katara gushed before throwing another bite in her mouth. Zuko nodded in agreement.

"If you don't mind me asking," the manâ€"number 23, Leo Bernard, according to his nametagâ€"said, "do you have any ideas for a design?"

Zuko was about to say no, hoping the guy would go away, when Katara cut in enthusiastically. "Oh, do we!"

"We do?" Zuko said through his teeth.

"Of course we do, darling," she brushed him off. Turning back to Leo: "I'm thinking blue gum-paste flowers, chocolate shavingsâ€"ooh, or maybe piping! Blue, of courseâ€"and it has to be four tiers, _at least_. We have a lot of people to feed at the reception."

"How many is a lot?" Zuko asked before he could stop himself.

"Oh, not too many. 3, maybe 400 is all."

Zuko's eyes bulged. "400?!" _Do I even know 400 people?_

"Yes, 400. Do you have problem with that?" she asked, her eyes flashing. Leo was looking between them now, his smile slightly wilting as he took in Katara's deathly stare. Zuko worked his jaw. Even if this was all fake, he wouldn't let her get away with everything. At least, not without a fight.

"Not at all, sugarplum," he said, derisively sweet. "I just wanted to make sure I heard you correctly. After all, I'm in charge of the band, and with 400 people we're going to need a _really _good DJ."

Her head tilted dangerously. "A DJ?" Zuko smirked. He knew how much she hated techno DJs whose only job was pumping their fist and hitting "next track" on their laptop keyboard.

"That's right. I was thinking of that one my cousin Jet had at his Bar Mitzvah. You know the one with the mole riiiightâ€"" he scooped a fingerful of icingâ€" "there." Katara's blue eyes crossed to the dot of icing beneath her nose, then slowly, frighteningly, rose back to meet his.

"Oh, darling," she started, her voice saccharine. "You know white isn't my color." She leaned over the women beside her and, without asking, ran her finger through the blue frosting on her piece of cake. The woman seemed as if she was about to say something until she saw the look on Katara's face, which effectively shut her up. Katara smiled up at Zuko. "Blue is more my color." And with that she smeared

the frosting across Zuko's forehead in a wide, sticky arc. "I guess it's not yours, though, is it darling?"

In a happy coincidence, a man on the other side of the table had a piece of cake filled with some sort of jelly—perhaps strawberry or cherry—and Zuko lunged to grab it. The man began to protest but it was too late. Zuko had already taken a glob of jelly and dragged it from Katara's hairline, down her nose, across her lips and down to her chin. "Then it's a good thing our color scheme is red, isn't it, _my_ _sugarplum_?" Zuko sneered, victorious.

Or not. "You. Can't. Do. Just. Red." Katara growled; a deep, guttural sound Zuko had never heard from her, but found surprisingly thrilling. Katara picked up the remainder of her cake and, as newlywed tradition dictates, pushed it directly into Zuko's mouth. And chin. And up his nose. He wiped just enough frosting from his eyes to glare at Katara and then, with a mischievous look, picked up his entire plate and shoved it into her face.

She shrieked, which garnered the attention of most of the people in the room, although neither of them noticed. Instead, they both grabbed whatever cake they could get their hands on and chucked it at one another. Their battle might have seemed malicious to the others watching and dodging flying chunks of wedding cake, but both of them were laughing through icing tears. The rest of the couples in the vicinity quickly got out of the line of fire, but some were still hit by shrapnel. One woman was freaking out about a streak of blue frosting that had grazed her dress, and another man was brushing crumbs out of his hair like dandruff. Zuko had a handful of some kind of chocolate cake, his arm poised to throw, when a shrill voice cut through the din. Glasses suddenly materialized between them, and while Zuko had noticed her in time to stop his attack, apparently Katara had not. Glasses turned around just as she released a full piece of meringue and it hit her square in the face, completely coating her black glasses.

Katara recoiled immediately, her frosted hands covering her gaping mouth, and Zuko stared at the both of them, frozen to the spot. Glasses moved so slowly he might have thought she was calm if he couldn't literally see the anger rolling off of her in menacing waves. She took off her glasses, gazing at them as if she had lost a dear friend on the battlefield, then looked up at Katara.

"Um—sorry?" she said in small voice. Then, before anything else could go wrong, Zuko darted around Glasses, grabbed Katara's arm, and sprinted for the doors. Katara was uncontrollably giggling by the time he got her in the car and ripped down the street. He kept glancing in his rearview mirror expecting to see a frosting-covered Glasses chasing after them. He was really glad Katara had given her fake names.

He looked over at Katara who was still laughing, the tears rolling down her cheeks, her hair plastered to the sides of her face with icing. He was covered as well and was not looking forward to cleaning this car. He pulled over beside a park as soon as the bakery was out of view and he was sure they wouldn't be discovered. His heart was hammering, probably half from their cake fight and half from all the sugar he'd eaten that day.

"I cannot believe we did that," he said, his hands still locked around the steering wheel.

"Me neither!" Katara agreed, hiccupping gently.

"You started it."

"Me? You're the one who gave me a buttercream mole!"

That did him in. Zuko chuckled, then laughed, and then couldn't stop. Soon enough Katara joined back in and the two of them leaned on each other across the console, their shoulders shaking, stomachs heaving. It was a good five minutes before either of them could calm enough to sit up straight, and by then their tears had washed away most of the cake remnants from their faces.

Zuko looked at Katara, with her glassy blue eyes, bloodshot from crying, and multi-colored frosting threaded through her long, chocolate brown hair. He couldn't imagine how long it would take her to wash all of it out. Even looking like this, though, he thought she was beautiful.

"Your dress is ruined," is what came out of his mouth, and he mentally slapped himself. Katara glanced down, then let out a huff of air.

"Huh. I guess you're right." She didn't seem too heartbroken.

"Do youâ€"uh, do you want me to take you back to your place? So you can change?"

Katara considered the offer, something unreadable on her face. "Actually, I'd rather not. My roommates would kill me if I got their stuff dirty."

"Oh." He wasn't sure exactly what he was supposed to do, then. That is, until he caught Katara looking at him, eyebrows raised. "Oh! You can come back to my place. To shower. I meanâ€"to get clean. To get the stuff off your dress. I have a washer and dryer. If you want, that is."

Katara grinned and crossed her bare feet on his dash. "Sounds good!"

That's how, at 2 in the afternoon, Zuko found himself in the kitchen absentmindedly stirring a pot of ramen. The sound of the shower in the other room wasn't very loud over the sound of their lunch cooking, but he knew it was there.

Katara was there. In his apartment. In his shower.

A bubble of boiling water popped, temporarily burning Zuko and bringing him back to reality. This is fine. It doesn't mean anything. It's completely normal, two friends just hanging out. Eating ramen. Taking showers.

Zuko shook his head, clearing these crazy, obviously inappropriate thoughts. Katara certainly wasn't in the shower thinking about him. She was probably just washing all the crusty frosting and cake bits out of her hair. He hoped his shower wasn't too gross. He hadn't had

a girl over for a long time, never one who had needed to use the shower.

He had insisted Katara take the first shower, to her irritation, but she needed it. If cake dried in her hair, it would be a bigger mess than if it dried in his. He heard the water shut off in the bathroom followed by the screech of the shower curtain and looked down at the ramen. It was pretty much done. He wasn't very hungry, and he imagined neither was she, but they needed something in their stomachs other than processed sugar. He got a strainer out of the cabinet and began separating the noodles into two bowls. From the other side of the apartment, he heard the door to his bedroom open and glanced over only to look back at the pot, face flushed, blood racing.

Katara had emerged from his room in the white t-shirt he had left out for her and a pair of his sweatpants, both of which were way too big for her petite body, and hung on her like an elf in giant's clothes. It was jarring to see her look like that, soâ€|at home.

"I _love _your shower, Zuko. We have communal ones at school, and they're always full of pubic hair," she said, sounding like she was frowning. He wouldn't know, since he refused to look away from their lunch.

"Here you go," he said, bringing a bowl to the wooden table by the window where he ate all of his meals. Usually there was just one chair there, but he had dragged a stool over from the kitchen for himself. He set the bowl in front of the real chair for her, and she made her way over.

"Aren't you eating?"

Zuko shook his head, looking at the wall next to her head rather than directly at her. "I'm going to shower quick. I'll just be a few minutes."

He disappeared into his bedroom before she could argue with him, although he was fairly certain she wouldn't eat until he got back, so he resolved to shower quickly. He stripped, throwing his soiled suit into the corner of the bathroom where he would deal with it later, and hopped into the shower. Nothing _looked _misplaced, not that he cared. But he was curious if she had snooped, even though there wasn't really much to uncover. She already knew all of his dirty secrets: the stuff about his dad and sister. She even knew about his mom, how she had left when Zuko and Azula were just kids. How his Uncle had basically been disowned by their family for something that had happened years and years ago. In fact, he wasn't sure if there was anyone who knew him better than she did.

Sokka, her brother, had always been pretty close to her, and, as a result, to Zuko. But he hadn't gone to college. Instead, he'd opted to work with his and Katara's father, intending to take over the family business once Hakoda retired. Their mother had died when they were both young, which was another reason he felt so comfortable telling Katara about his own past. About everything, really.

Out of the corner of his eye, Zuko noticed a piece of dark hair plastered to the wall, about the length of his forearm. He smiled. She had cleaned out the rest of the shower pretty wellâ€"not even a sprinkle was left on the shower floor. Zuko quickly washed his hair

and body, only relishing in the warm water for a little while, which he usually did for a good 10 minutes at least, then got out. He dried his body, then his hair, and as he wrapped the dark red towel around his neck, he saw something written on the steamed-up mirror.

Thanks for today, darling it read, along with a lopsided heart at the end. Zuko traced the heart with his thumb, briefly forgetting he was standing there buck naked with a towel around his neck and his wet hair dripping water down his chest. Something warm coiled in his stomach, and he didn't think it had anything to do with the temperature of the bathroom.

Back in his bedroom, Zuko threw on a pair of jeans and the t-shirt that smelled the least bad. Not surprisingly, when he went back to the kitchen Katara was standing in front of the microwave, leaning against the counter, arms crossed casually, watching the timer count down. When he reentered she looked up, smiling before her lips settled to a pleased smirk. "I kept your food warm, you dork." The timer went off and she opened the microwave, pulling out two full bowls of ramen. Zuko continued to stroll towards her, not sure what he was going to do when he got there.

"Seriously," she was still saying, "who cooks hot food then takes a shower before he eats? How do you survive living on your own?" She held out one of the bowls to him, and he took it, but then set it down on the counter. Katara frowned. "What are youâ€" "

Zuko's pressed closer, though their bodies didn't touch, and his hands reached up to cup her face lightly.

"Zukoâ€" |."

"Thanks for today." His eyes peered into hers, as if they held the thing he had been looking for all this time. Maybe they had. Maybe he didn't know exactly what it was he'd been looking for. But he wanted to find out.

She looked up at him, her eyes bright, hesitant. "You're welcome."

Somehow he had moved closer, or maybe she had, but now she was leaning on the counter, his thighs warm against hers. Distantly he thought that his ramen was going to get cold, but then again, so was hers. "I really needed this today," he said, and he wasn't sure entirely what he was talking about anymore.

"Me too."

"Katara?"

"Yes?"

"Can I kiss you?"

"Yes."

And then she kissed him, which both surprised and pleased him at the same time. Her back arched against the counter and he heard the ceramic _clank_ of her bowl clatter on the table. Her hands wrapped around his neck and he pulled her closer to him, threading one hand

through her damp hair.

Her lips were soft and warm but insistent, and Zuko took to following her tempo, his mind too cloudy with euphoria to think of anything other than her lips against his and her hands on his chest and back and her mouth, which still tasted sweet like frosting. He moved his hands to her jaw, tilting her face up so he could run a trail of kisses from her lips to her ear. She moaned and clawed at his hips, and he responded by tugging her closer, making them stumble back until his shoulders hit the refrigerator.

Katara fell against his chest and moved her hands to his hair, her fingers running through it like he had done a million times before, but it was just _so much better _when she did it. He felt her smile and felt the hot exhale of her laugh on his cheek.

"What?" he murmured against her lips, still too overwhelmed by _her _to get the joke.

She pulled back just far enough to put her hand between their faces, and Zuko, confused, looked at it.

"You missed a spot," she giggled, wiggling her frosting-covered fingers. Zuko, too keyed up to feel embarrassed, laughed along with her. He'd been a little distracted in the shower—her fault, by the way—so it wasn't too surprising that he still had gunk in his hair. She wiped her fingers on his shirt and looked up at him from under her eyelashes.

"So. Are you still mad I woke you up at 7 this morning?"

"It was 6, actually," Zuko corrected. She rolled her eyes and tried to playfully push him away, but he tightened his hold on her waist. "But I'm not mad. I'm—actually kind of glad."

"Are you?"

"Kind of."

"Just kind of?"

"Okay," Zuko conceded with a smirk, "a little more than kind of." He dropped his forehead to rest on hers. "Are you mad I gave you a buttercream mole?"

Katara started laughing again, her nose bumping into his cheek, and he couldn't help but stare at her; the way her nose scrunched up when she smiled, the little lines beside her closed eyes, the totally unrestricted way she laughed. Things he had noticed before, he knew, but now seemed so much more important.

"No," she managed to choke out. "I forgive you for that."

"Good."

"But Zuko?"

"Yeah?"

She smiled confidently at him. "The color scheme for our wedding
_will _be ocean blue and pearl."

"Fine. But how about a date first?"

"Sounds good."

He kissed her again.

End
file.